



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

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## **The United States in World Affairs**

Course Syllabus  
Spring 2012

HST/POL 309  
TTh 1:00-2:15  
Tech Hall 14

Dr. Matthew O’Gara  
Office: Morledge-Kimball 214  
Office Hours: TTh 12:00-1:00, and *all*  
*day* MWF (by appointment)  
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### Course Description:

The primary goal of this course is to foster a deep understanding of the past, present, and future of American foreign policy, and to examine in detail the history of policymaking and presidential doctrines. As the dominant actor in the international system, and as the state that has a great deal of influence upon the “rules of the game,” we seek to understand the behavior and policy of the United States in part to understand the recent and future direction of global politics more broadly.

To manage such an ambitious undertaking, we will focus on the post-WWII world; this approach is obviously limited in that it passes over American ascendancy – but in favor of greater depth of study on the era of American dominance, and ultimately this will lead us to the question of possible (perhaps inevitable) American decline. To some extent, we will be looking to define what has been called “America’s Mission,” and ask what this means going into the 21st century.

In addition to a single primary text, we will read four distinct analyses of US foreign policy from experts in the field; in this way we will first establish a historical understanding and follow up with thematic works which will help in our ability to frame an answer to the question of the likely direction of US policymaking in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. Finally, we will augment these scholarly tomes with a very astute and relevant novel on the paradoxes and problems of US foreign policy in Southeast Asia during the lead-up to the Vietnam war.

### Required Texts:

Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh, *US Foreign Policy Since 1945*.

Samir Amin, *The Liberal Virus*.

Gabriel Kolko, *The Age of War*.

William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American*.

John Rapley, *Globalization and Inequality*.

Ronald Steel, *Temptations of a Superpower*.

Supplemental readings will be handed out in class or can be obtained online.

### Course Policies:

The first requirement of each student is to understand that this is an academic environment and as such it is necessary that there is a high degree of civility, respect for fellow students, and respect for the material. You are expected to do *all* assigned readings, and you must participate in class if you hope to earn a passing grade.

1. Missed Classes: This course covers a great deal of material and meets just twice a week; therefore repeated absences will not be tolerated. Students are allowed three absences, regardless of circumstance. Subsequent absences will result in your course grade being rescaled down by 1/3; i.e. a student with six absences will have their final grade reduced 1 point on a 4.0 scale.
2. Missed Assignments: If you do not turn in a graded assignment your maximum grade in the course will be rescaled along a 90/80/70/60 scale; i.e. if you fail to hand in a paper worth 20 percent of your grade, your highest possible grade in the class will be a B, regardless of your average on a 4-point scale.
3. Late Papers: Papers will lose one full letter grade per class session late. No exceptions.
4. Plagiarism and Cheating: Neither will be tolerated, and if a student is caught doing either they will fail the course and I will recommend to the Dean of Students that said student be expelled from school.
5. Laptops: Laptops or the use of other electronic devices is not allowed in class. This includes e-readers, as I will not participate in the demise of the written word.
6. Email: Do not assume that I check my email every day and do not use email as a means of conversation. Email should be used only for quick, non-emergency questions and for setting up appointments for face-to-face meetings in my office.

## **Graded Assignments:**

### Midterm Exam:

After completing the Dobson and Marsh text, on March 8 (week 8 of the semester), we will have an in-class midterm. The format of the exam will be a straightforward: a list of terms will be given for which students are required to provide definitions in the form of short-answers. Prior to the exam you will be given a list of possible terms, from which I will select a specified number. This will give students the opportunity to showcase what they *do* know, rather than to try to get at what they *don't*.

It is my philosophy that exams should be completely predictable in the sense that students will know exactly what is expected of them before they walk in the room. You will encounter no trick questions.

### Final Capstone Paper:

Your final paper will be an 10-12 page essay which will serve as a comprehensive analysis on the question of the likely direction of US foreign policy in the 21st century; you will be required to explain the opportunities, constraints, advantages, and difficulties faced by America as the primary actor within the international system. This paper will be comprehensive in terms of unifying all the materials we have covered in the semester, but it will not require any outside research.

You will receive a handout with specific guidelines to help you direct your essay, and this paper should be composed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, with normal one-inch margins. Papers will lose 1/3 of a grade if they exceed the stated limits, are not paginated properly, or are not stapled. Late papers will lose one full grade per day late.

### Reading Quizzes:

There will be several quizzes given throughout the semester, the exact number will depend on rates of participation in course discussions and whether students come to class prepared. Reading quizzes are rudimentary examinations used to determine who is and who is not doing assigned readings; a student who fails a quiz will be counted absent for that class session, thus diminishing their overall grade as delineated in Course Policy 1.

### Grading:

All papers and exams will be graded on an A-F scale and will be averaged as follows:

Midterm Exam: 30 percent

Capstone Paper: 50 percent

Participation: 20 percent

## Grading Criteria:

These are the standards I adhere to when I grade essays. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference, as do split grades (e.g. B-/C+). Grades are based on the evidence of the essay submitted, not on effort or time spent.

### A

Excellent in every way (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive essay that grapples with interesting, complex ideas; responds discerningly to counter-arguments; and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. The analysis enhances, rather than underscores, the reader's and writer's knowledge (it doesn't simply repeat what has been taught). There is a context for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the essay. Its introduction opens up, rather than flatly announces, its thesis. Its conclusion is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, often elegant. The reader should feel enlightened and educated for having read the paper. There's something new in your analysis, something perhaps only you could have written and explored, in this particular way. The writer's stake in the material is obvious.

### B

A piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts don't fit in. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me. This is a solid essay whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine (the limitation is largely conceptual).

### C

A piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: conception (there's at least one main idea but it is fuzzy and difficult to understand); structure (non-linear development of your ideas); use of textual evidence (weak or non-existent -- the connections among the ideas and the evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or are simple platitudes and generalizations); language (the sentences are often awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions, sometimes contradict each other). The essay may not move forward but rather may repeat its main points, or it may touch upon many (and apparently unrelated) ideas without exploring any of them in sufficient depth and without a developmental flow. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may be a problem.  
-or- an essay that is largely plot summary or "interpretive summary" of the text, but is written without major problems.  
-or- an essay that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. Well-written, but scant intellectual content -- mostly opinion.

### D and F

These are efforts that are wildly shorter than they ought to be to grapple seriously with ideas.  
-or- those that are extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: aims, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.;  
-or- those that do not come close to addressing the expectations of the essay assignment.

## Participation:

The majority of class time will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings. Discussion can include (but is not limited to) an analysis and/or critique of the author's position, a comparison of the assigned work to another text, or debate as to the meaning or merit of a given work (or particular points therein).

Class participation is evaluated on quality rather than quantity. Comments need not mirror the position of the author (or the professor). You are graded not on the "correctness" of your position, but rather on your analysis of the material and your ability to articulate your ideas. You don't have to be at the center of every debate, but students who make little or no effort to enter discussions will receive a lower participation grade. Discussion will become lively, heated even. Always respect the positions of others. When you disagree with someone, be sure to criticize the *idea* and not the person.

Participation will be graded according to the following criteria:

### A

The student in this grade range arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading. Comments reveal that the student has read carefully; this student occasionally initiates the discussion without waiting for the professor to do so. This student does not, however, try to dominate the class, but listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as to the instructor's questions.

### B

The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. There is evidence of having done the reading. This student pays attention to the comments of the other students.

### C

The student in this grade range participates only intermittently, and is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. Sometimes unprepared, this student lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class, neglects to bring the proper text to class, and is often inattentive.

### D or F

The student in this grade range seldom if ever participates.

Things that lower your participation grade:

- \* Not paying attention in class
- \* A ringing cellphone
- \* Talking to your neighbor or holding conversations separate from the class discussion
- \* A student who is seen using their phone for text messaging will receive an F as their final participation grade

NOTE: Unlike paper grades, participation will *not* be given plus/minus or split grades, and your final grade is weighted in a manner such as to make it impossible for you to receive an A for the course if your participation grade is not an A.

## Semester Schedule:

### Week 1:

1/10

Introduction and Course Outline

1/12

Ronald Steel, "The Weak at War With the Strong," handout

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### Week 2:

1/17

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 1, "US Foreign Policy: Evolution, Formulation and Execution."

1/19

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 2, "The US and the Cold War: Explanation and Containment."

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### Week 3:

1/24

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 3, "Superpower Collaboration and Confrontation: US Containment Policy, 1950-91."

1/26

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 4, "Economic Statecraft, 1945-89."

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### Week 4:

1/31

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 5, "The US and Europe, 1950-89."

2/2

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 6, "Hegemony and the Western Hemisphere."

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Week 5:

2/7

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 7, "The US and Asia, 1945-89."

2/9

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 8, "The US, Africa and the Middle East, 1945-89."

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Week 6:

2/14

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 9, "Power and Purpose: The End of the Cold War and New Challenges for American Foreign Policy."

2/16

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 10, "The US and Post-Cold War Europe."

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Week 7:

2/21

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 11, "The US and Post-Cold War Africa and the Middle East."

2/23

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 12, "The Western Hemisphere and Asia in the Post-Cold War World."

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2/27-3/4

Midterm Break

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Week 8:

3/6

Dobson and Marsh, Chapter 13, "Conclusion."  
Review for Midterm

3/8

**MIDTERM EXAM**

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Week 9:

3/13

Steel, *Temptations of a Superpower*, 1-3

3/15

Steel, *Temptations of a Superpower*, 5-7

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Week 10:

3/20

Kolko, *The Age of War*, Chapters 1 & 2

3/22

Kolko, *The Age of War*, Chapters 3 & 4

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Week 11:

3/27

Kolko, *The Age of War*, Chapters 5 & 6

3/29

Amin, *The Liberal Virus*, Introduction, Chapters I-III

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Week 12:

4/3

Amin, *The Liberal Virus*, Chapter IV

4/5

Rapley, *Globalization and Inequality*, Chapters 1 & 2

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Week 13:

4/10

Rapley, *Globalization and Inequality*, Chapters 3 & 4

4/12

Rapley, *Globalization and Inequality*, Chapters 5-7

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Week 14:

4/17

Lederer and Burdick, *The Ugly American*, Chapters 1-7

4/19

Lederer and Burdick, *The Ugly American*, Chapters 8-16

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Week 15:

4/24

Lederer and Burdick, *The Ugly American*, Chapters 17-22

4/26

Individual tutorials/reading of drafts

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5/2

**FINAL PAPERS DUE**